



JATM BREAKS COVER

The US military is developing a new advanced air-to-air missile to counter specific threats from China and Russia, and a few details have now emerged.

REPORT **Jamie Hunter**

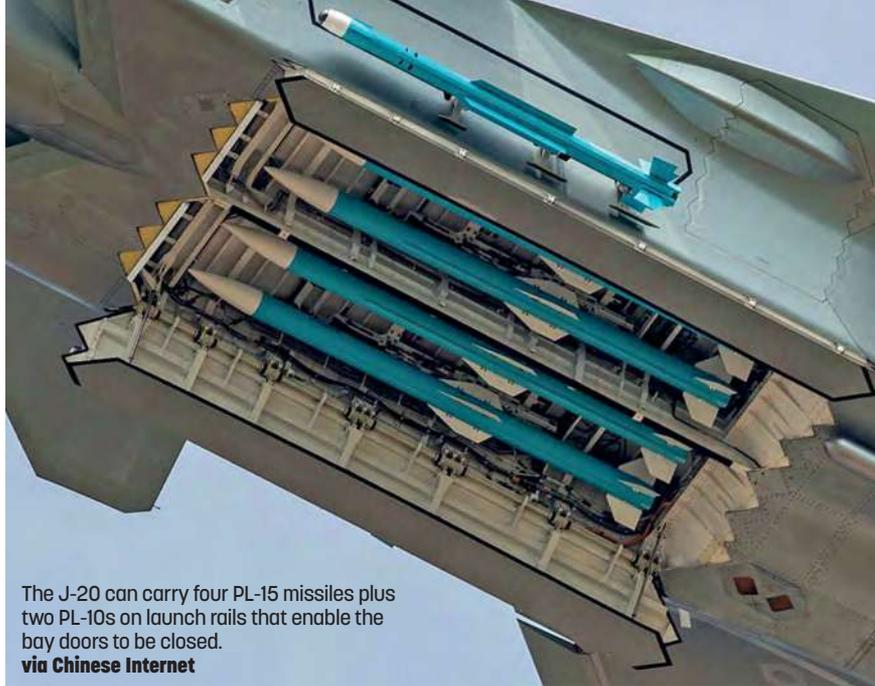
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This image: A new air dominance missile has been mooted for the F-22 Raptor for some time, and now the AIM-260 looks set to replace the AIM-120D AMRAAM. **Jamie Hunter**

Below: Brig Gen Anthony Genatempo, USAF Program Executive Officer for weapons and director of the Armament Directorate. **USAF**



The J-20 can carry four PL-15 missiles plus two PL-10s on launch rails that enable the bay doors to be closed. **via Chinese Internet**

THE US AIR Force has revealed that it has been secretly developing a new air-to-air missile to supersede the AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM).

The Lockheed Martin AIM-260 Joint Air Tactical Missile (JATM) is to be fielded initially by the USAF on its F-22A Raptors and by the US Navy on its F/A-18E/F Super Hornets in the forthcoming H16 System Configuration Set.

USAF Program Executive Officer for Weapons and Director of the Armament Directorate Brig Gen Anthony Genatempo told reporters at a media event at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, on June 20, that the missile team includes the air force, navy and army, as well as Lockheed Martin. He said work began with Lockheed Martin on JATM in 2017 and that initial operating capability is set for 2022.

It's not the first time the AIM-260 has been publicly referred-to. In December 2018, a Naval Air Systems Command media release named the weapon in relation to a logistics award. However, this was the first official comment on the clandestine project.

'It is meant to be the next air-to-air air dominance weapon for our air-to-air fighters,' Genatempo said. 'It has a range greater than AMRAAM, different capabilities onboard to go after that specific threat set, but certainly longer legs.'

Brig Gen Genatempo is a career acquisition professional and has served in numerous program management

and senior leader positions including avionics program manager for the F-22. In his current role he is responsible for the planning and execution of all life-cycle activities for air-delivered munitions.

Analysis

JATM cuts through a raft of different air dominance projects over the past decade that included Boeing's Joint Dual Role Air Dominance Missile (JDRADM). The AIM-260 appears to have been developed on an aggressive timeline and it is specifically designed to counter high-end Chinese and Russian fighters such as the J-20 and Su-57 and the new air-to-air missiles they will carry — including China's impressive PL-15. At the 2018 Zhuhai airshow, a pair of J-20s showed a full load of internally carried PL-15s and a family of longer-range missiles are now in development both in China and Russia.

The USAF is unwilling to divulge too many details about JATM, but range, improved seeker technology and countermeasures to mitigate advanced jamming techniques will be driving factors. It is known that AIM-120 manufacturer Raytheon has worked on air-breathing, throttleable, ramjet propulsion, the type of technology already fielded in MBDA's Meteor Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM), but there is no publicly available information on Lockheed's powerplant solution for JATM. Due to internal weapons bay size limitations with the Raptor, the AIM-260 is likely to be of similar dimensions to the AMRAAM. 